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A N

E S S A Y

ON THE

Advantages of the Knowledge revealed to Mankind,

CONCERNING

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

THE LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER.

MY LORD,

THE Attention with which your Lordſhip honoured Two former Publications of this Kind, and the good Opinion you were pleaſed to expreſs concerning them, not only raiſed them in the Eſteem of their Author, but alſo encouraged him to requeſt your Lordſhip's Protection of the preſent Performance. When I ſolicited this flattering Diſtinction, my chief Motive was, not ſo much to gain the notice of the public, through the Sanction of ſo revered a Name, as to add Reſpectability to the Prize your Lordſhip was ſo inſtrumental in eſtabliſhing.

I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obliged Servant,

JOSEPH WHITELEY.

A N E S S A Y

ON

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CONCERNING

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

MAN, in a ſtate of nature, is a compound of greatneſs and frailty. He is capable of knowledge, yet is often miſled into error. He can contemplate the whole ſyſtem of being, from infinity down to nothing; yet, is alike ignorant of the ſmalleſt atom and the largeſt orb. He can reaſon of cauſe and effect, of liberty and neceſſity; he can trace the gradations of matter, motion, ſenſe, perception, intellect: He can form plans of government, and even explain the laws of the univerſe; yet he knows not what he himſelf is; and cannot aſſign either his origin or his deſtination. He is impelled by an inſtinctive love of happineſs, but generally meets with diſappointment and miſery. He finds himſelf actuated by contending principles: He ſees his paſſions at war with his underſtanding; and, while he reaſons like an angel, he too often acts like a brute.

ſuch

Such was the ſtate of the heathen ſages, when directed only by the Light of Nature. Through the medium of created objects, they perceived notices of Deity. In the conſtitution of a blade of graſs, as well as in the ſtructure of an organized animal, they diſcerned the finger of God. From unity of deſign, from final cauſes, and from the magnificence of the world, they inferred the unity, wiſdom and power of the Creator; yet they neglected to pay him religious homage: They ſupported the vulgar ſuperſtition, by the influence of example, and the ſanction of laws; and transferred the adoration, due to the One True God, to the moſt contemptible of his creatures; to dead men deified; to brutes, to reptiles, and even to ſenſeleſs matter.

After ſuch perverſion of their knowledge, they were judicially abandoned to their natural blindneſs, and to all the extravagance of mental infatuation (a). Their underſtandings became ſo dark, that, in religious matters, they could not diſtinguiſh truth from falſehood; and their wills ſo depraved, that they preferred the pleaſures of ſenſe to the remote, but permanent rewards of virtue. They formed ſyſtems of happineſs, as opinion prompted, or imagination ſuggeſted. They affected, either to renounce their paſſions, and emulate the gods; or to degrade their reaſon, and claim kindred with the brutes. And, whether they conſidered the ſoul as conſubſtantial with the Deity, or of no higher origin than their flocks and herds, their concluſions were founded in extremes equally remote from truth; and terminated, either in error, in ignorance, or at beſt, in doubt and uncertainty.

If we look into the Holy Scriptures, we ſee the myſtery of human nature

(a) *See Epiſtle to the Romans*, c. i. v. 21. *to the end of the chapter.*

nature unravelled. We read that man was once innocent and happy; that he is now in a ſtate of degradation; and, that he is miſerable becauſe he is ſinful. We are alſo informed, that, after the fall, ſin overſpread the world; that it blinded and enſlaved the human mind; that it rendered the ſoul a ſtranger to happineſs, and obliterated the faireſt characters of its divine origin.

As we are informed of our diſeaſe, we are alſo acquainted with a remedy. The ſame ſcripture which reveals our fall, repreſents the Son of God as humbling himſelf, even to the death upon the croſs, for our redemption; and another divine perſon, the Holy Spirit, as compleating our redemption by the renovation of our nature.

But, how will this account relieve the mind from uncertainty? How are we ſure that the book which contains this information is not the invention of men? The anſwer is obvious. The authors of this book profeſs a divine commiſſion: They eſtabliſh their pretenſions by miracles and prophecy; and, ſuch is the ſublimity of their doctrines, ſo happy their tendency, and ſo indiſputable their claim, that we can reſt ſatisfied with their diſcoveries, as the genuine information of that Divine Spirit, who abhors deceit, and is incapable of error.

We are not here confounding the Advantages of Revelation with thoſe of the Knowledge revealed concerning the Holy Spirit. The Advantage, for which we now contend, is, the certainty of what is revealed; the conviction that the founders of our religion ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt (a); and, of conſequence, the infallibility of that written rule, which they compoſed for the direction of their followers. With-

(a) 2 *Pet.* i. 21.

Without this certainty, we ſhould derive no more conſolation from the Goſpel, than from the fables of the poets, or the dreams of the philoſophers; we ſhould fluctuate on the dangerous ocean of ſcepticiſm, without either anchor or pilot: But, when we are convinced that "all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God" (a), we have a ſteady light to diſcover our dangers, and a ſure guide to direct our courſe.

The divine agency, which was always diſcernible, was at firſt confined: Afterwards it became more general and more diſtinct, in proportion as the Kingdom of Grace approached, which it was deſigned to introduce. It was, in general, ſufficiently clear to give credibility to the prophet, by the accompliſhment of ſome literal prediction which was near; and which was, at the ſame time, a ſymbolical repreſentation of ſome ſignal bleſſings of the church, which were remote and diſtant: Until at length, in completion of our Saviour's immediate promiſe, the effuſion of the Spirit was viſibly manifeſted in the gift of tongues; and his power diſplayed in every part of the world, by that aſtoniſhing revolution in the minds of men, which induced polytheiſts to renounce the religion of their fathers, effaced the deepeſt impreſſions of cuſtom and nature, and impelled even women to contend for the prize of martyrdom.

It would lead too far from the ſubject, to defend the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, againſt the cavils of infidelity, and the extravagancies of fanaticiſm: Thoſe who imagine that the gift of tongues was an occaſional ſign only of a divine miſſion, which ſign ceaſed and vaniſhed, as ſoon as it had anſwered that particular purpoſe (b), ſeem to have either miſtaken, or overlooked, the obvious

(a) 2 *Tim.* iii. 16. — (b) *See the ſecond volume of Dr. Middleton's Works*, p. 79.

vious ſenſe of that paſſage, wherein Chriſt himſelf promiſes his diſciples, that they ſhall be enabled, by the Holy Ghoſt, to be his witneſſes to the uttermoſt parts of the earth (a).

Thoſe, who, at the preſent day, fancy themſelves ſelected to be the vehicles of ſupernatural truth, attend more to their own imaginations, than to the infallible dictates of Revelation (b). Exterior miracles have ſerved their purpoſe, and are no longer neceſſary. They were originally conferred upon the church, in order to prove its divine birth; to protect its infant ſtate; to aſſiſt its growth and progreſs; and to afford a pledge of that divine, but unſeen, influence, which would abide with it for ever. Above all, they have demonſtrated the certainty, as well as the importance, of that pardon, which is offered through Chriſt to ſinners, on the terms of repentance, faith, and obedience.

But, ſuch is the frailty, and the corruption, of human nature, that we are not able, of ourſelves, to perform theſe neceſſary conditions. The offer of pardon would therefore have been in vain, on theſe terms, had it not been accompanied with a promiſe that the Holy Spirit would enable us to fulfil them, by condeſcending to to change our inclinations (c), to enlighten our underſtandings (d), and to rectify our wills (e).

On the knowledge of this promiſe, our ſalvation depends: and therefore, the advantage of being aſſured that the ordinary opera-

(a) *Acts* i. 8. — (b) *It is hard to conceive that any man can have imitated that miraculous illumination which characterized the day of Pentecoſt, by any impoſture, chance, or fanaticiſm.* — (c) *See Ezek.* xi. 19, 20. xxxvi. 27. — (d) *John* xiv. 26. xvi. 13. — (e) *Tit.* iii. 5, 6. *Epheſ.* v. 26, 27. 1 *Pet.* i. 2. 22.

tions of the Holy Spirit may be procured by diligent prayer (a), is ſo great, that it mocks every attempt to eſtimate it. For, no intereſt can be ſo important, no poſſeſſion ſo valuable, as to ſtand in competition with endleſs felicity.

To a careleſs obſerver, it may ſeem ſtrange that Repentance ſhould be aſſumed as the effect of a divine impulſe. But, in truth, is it not as incredible, that the mind, in its natural ſtate, ſhould give itſelf a new direction, as that body ſhould put itſelf in motion?

Man is compoſed of habits: Habits are the ſprings of action: They urge forward the ſlow deliberations of reaſon, and impel them with vigour. Their exertions are ſo forcible, that they have obtained the appellation of ſecond nature; and, with ſuch propriety, that the great Paſcal thought it indifferent, whether we call nature itſelf a primary cuſtom, or cuſtom a ſecondary nature (b).

To renounce theſe habits, without ſome extraordinary impulſe, is, morally ſpeaking, as contradictory to the known principles of our nature, as for the Ethiopian to change his ſkin, or the Leopard his ſpots (c): It requires the perſuaſive energy of that divine ſpirit, who formed at firſt the perfection of the human frame; who ſtill operates unſeen; and ſubdues the impenitent hearts of men, without attracting their obſervation. We may therefore acquieſce, with full conviction, in the declaration of Saint Peter, that God hath exalted our Redeemer, for this very purpoſe, that, through his Holy Spirit, he might give repentance, and remiſſion of ſins (d).

Faith is another condition of ſalvation. Its preſent meaning was firſt introduced, and its obligation enforced, by the religion of Chriſt:

(a) *Luke* xi. 13. — (b) *Penſées.* — (c) *Jer.* xiii. 23. — (d) *Acts* v. 31.

Chriſt: And, though its nature may be eaſily comprehended, its genuine effects can never be produced by the common operations of the mind. In order to weaken the obligation of this important duty, it has been artfully confounded with belief (a); which, though eſſential to its nature, conſtitutes but a ſmall part of it. In belief, as in perception, our minds are generally paſſive. When an unknown truth is propoſed for our aſſent, we are determined by the evidence adduced. If this evidence be cogent, we believe; if ſuſpicious, we heſitate; and, ſo far, our belief, or heſitation, cannot be the ſubject of either praiſe or blame.

But Faith is not merely a ſpeculative aſſent to the goſpel: It is ſuch a practical conviction, on the teſtimony of God, as produces obedience to his will. But, when man refuſes to be taught by his Creator; when he diſdains the meſſenger of heaven; when he diſmiſſes his pretenſions without enquiry; or adheres to his own wiſdom, and follows his own inclinations, in ſpite of rational conviction; unbelief becomes a vice of no common magnitude; as it is directly oppoſite to that candour, gentleneſs, and ſubmiſſive docility, which adorn and dignify the virtuous mind. Theſe duties muſt be acknowledged to be univerſally binding: and their obligation, encreaſing in proportion to the magnitude of their object, will neceſſarily become infinitely greater in a religion, whoſe rewards and puniſhments are unbounded in degree, as well as in duration. And the obligation being greater, the violation of them will become criminal in the ſame proportion. For it is on this ground of argument that, morally ſpeaking, unbelief may be ſaid to "proceed from an evil heart."

(a) *Eſt on maitre de croire, ou de ne pas croire? Rouſſeau*, tom. 6. p. 305.

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This reaſoning is abundantly confirmed in the word of truth. There infidelity is claſſed with hypocriſy (a): And it is declared by the Saviour of the world, that Faith is the appointed mean of ſalvation; and that Unbelief will be followed by the ſame conſequences with thoſe which will reſult from final impenitence (b).

The truths of the goſpel, though perhaps not atteſted with the utmoſt degree of evidence, are yet proved with ſuch clearneſs, as to eſtabliſh the faith of a candid enquirer; and will not fail to produce, in an honeſt heart, the fruits of love to God, and charity to man. But then, in order to poſſeſs this faith, the mind muſt firſt be prepared by the Holy Spirit. Inſtead of remaining ſtubborn and perverſe, it muſt become docile and candid. It muſt be attentive and inquiſitive; and diſpoſed to learn, with humility and thankfulneſs, whatever its Creator will condeſcend to teach. It muſt be in earneſt for ſalvation; ſenſible of its guilt, and conſcious of it own helpleſsneſs; and then it will devoutly ſeek for repoſe in the mercy of a Redeemer.

This faith, which, we are aſſured, is the gift of God (c), "cometh by hearing" (d); and therefore depends wholly on the knowledge revealed. It is the beginning of a new life to every one who receives it. It gives a new direction to his underſtanding, and a new biaſs to his affections (e). The true believer conſiders himſelf as a ſtranger upon earth (f). He regards the preſent life, as intended for a ſtate of trial, and a courſe of diſcipline. He looks for difficulty, temptation, and conteſt. And, were it not for the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is ready to communicate ſupport and

(a) *Luke* xii. 46. — (b) *Mark* xvi. 6. *John* iii. 15. 18. — (c) *Epeſ.* ii. 8. — (d) *Rom.* x. 14. 17. — (e) 2 *Cor.* v. 15, 16, 17. — (f) 1 *Pet.* ii. 11. *Epheſ.* vi. 11, 12.

and ſtrength, proportioned to every occaſion (a), he would ſoon be diſcouraged at the proſpect of inſuperable difficulties; and, at length, return to his old habits. As a body moving in a reſiſting medium is gradually retarded; till, without a ſucceſſion of freſh impulſes, it is entirely overpowered, and returns to its original ſtate of reſt.

When the Chriſtian regards himſelf as in a ſtate of warfare; when he ſees himſelf encompaſſed with enemies, who are eager for his deſtruction; and who are always on the watch to ſurprize him inactive, or to encounter him unarmed; what can be more encouraging than the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is ready to furniſh him with armour to reſiſt, and with weapons to aſſail his baffled enemy? To ſupply him with the girdle of truth, the breaſtplate of righteouſneſs, and the ſhield of faith (b); to renew his ſtrength, to ſupport his reſolution, to revive his courage; and, finally, to enable him to obtain the prize of victory, like "a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt" (c).

Such is the Knowledge revealed to Mankind concerning the Holy Spirit: And its advantages will appear ſtriking, if, for a moment, we ſuppoſe it withdrawn: For then, we ſhould be left to our own ſtrength; we ſhould ſeem beſet with obſtacles which we could never ſurmount, and ſhould abandon ourſelves to deſpondency or deſpair: For we could have no notion of divine aſſiſtance; and, of courſe, could never apply for it: And, without application on our part, we cannot ſuppoſe it would be gratuitouſly beſtowed; at leaſt, not with the ſame effect: For it ſeems to be the purpoſe of the Divine Spirit, in diſpenſing his grace, to aſſiſt thoſe who are aiming

(a) *Heb.* iv. 16.—(b) *Epeſ.* vi. 13—17.—(c) 2 *Tim.* ii. 3.

aiming at moral and virtuous improvements; and, not ſo much to give them ſupernatural inſtruction, concerning ſubjects of which they had no previous conception, as to co-operate with their endeavours, in accompliſhing ends which they have diſtinctly in view.

Another advantage of this knowledge conſiſts, in enabling the Chriſtian to live with chearfulneſs under every diſpenſation of Providence. He is convinced that no change of circumſtances happens, without the permiſſion of his heavenly Father; and that, however unpromiſing be the appearance, it will, in the end, be productive of good (a); becauſe it is the appointment of that God, whoſe wiſdom determines, and whoſe goodneſs cannot but confer, what is ultimately the beſt for man.

Thus, if he is obliged to deſcend from affluence to poverty; if he is oppreſſed with pain or ſickneſs; or ſuffers the loſs of a parent or a friend; he knows that theſe afflictions were intended, by his heavenly Father, to encreaſe his humility, to mortify ſome evil affection which was lurking in his heart, and to leſſen his attachment to worldly objects. If he is bleſſed with riches, he knows they were deſigned to prove his fidelity as a ſteward, in relieving the wants of his brethren. If he falls into temptation, he ſees it was permitted, in order to quicken the ſenſe of his own weakneſs, and to ſtimulate his applications to the throne of grace. If he has friends, he adores the Divine Goodneſs; if he has enemies, he bleſſes the rod which corrects him; and he conſiders the treachery, the inſults, and the malice of the world, as ſo many teſts of his courage, ſo many trials of his patience, and ſo many proofs of his long-ſuffering and charity (b).

Ano-

(a) *Rom.* viii. 28.—(b) 2 *Cor.* viii. 2. 1 *Pet.* i. 7. *Jam.* i. 3.

Another advantage of this knowledge, allied to the former, yet diſtinct from it, conſiſts, in affording an infallible criterion, whereby any man may judge of the moral ſtate of his own heart. Let him obſerve what paſſes in his mind, on receiving a perſonal inſult; and compare his diſpoſitions with the fruits of a heart cultivated by the Spirit of God. If he indulges the riſings of anger; if he cheriſhes a malicious purpoſe; if he harbours an intention of future reſentment, and treaſures up a ſecret reſolution of revenge; he may ſee that his heart is wholly unrenewed (a); and may, hereby, be powerfully impelled to apply for the operation of that Divine Being, who alone can ſubdue the ſtubborn ſpirit (b), and impart medicine to heal its ſickneſs (c).

If, on the other hand, he can ſuppreſs the emotions of anger; if he can curb his boiſterous paſſions, and bring them into ſubjection to that charity which "ſuffereth long and is kind" (d); if he has learned the art of ſelf-government; and ſtudies to cultivate the heavenly diſpoſitions of mildneſs, gentleneſs, and forbearance; he has the happineſs of perceiving that he has made ſome growth in grace (e), ſome progreſs in virtue: And, as he knows in whom he has believed (f), he can reſt, in full aſſurance, that his labour will not be in vain (g).

From this repreſentation, it will appear that the Holy Spirit is, with the utmoſt propriety, ſtyled a Comforter (h): For all his operations have the moſt direct tendency to inſpire the Chriſtian with joy and peace, with gratitude and reſignation (i). It is owing to ſome

(a) *Titus* iii. 3.—(b) *Micah* vii. 19. *Phil.* iii. 21.—(c) *Pſal.* cxlvii. 3. *Iſa.* lxi. 1. *Luke* iv. 18.—(d) 1 *Cor.* xiii. 4.—(e) 2 *Pet.* iii. 18.—(f) 2 *Tim.* i. 12.—(g) 1 *Cor.* xv. 58.—(h) *John* xiv. 16. 26. xv. 26.—(i) *Rom.* v. 5.—*Gal.* v. 22.

ſome foreign cauſe, to the preſſure of ſome painful affliction, or to the reproofs of conſcience for ſome accidental neglect of duty, if his brow is ever clouded, or his heart ever ſad. Praiſe is the natural effuſion of his ſoul, and he enjoys unmingled pleaſure at every recollection of the Divine Bounty (a). His reflections on providence, death and eternity, which, before, were ſources of terror, now inſpire him with delight. He regards the Almighty as his father and his friend (b). He ſurveys his natural perfections with reverential awe, yet with firmneſs and complacency: And he contemplates with tranſport that beauty of holineſs which pervades his moral character. During his courſe of diſcipline, he exults in the knowledge of his glorious reward. His whole life is warmed with the ſunſhine of conſcious integrity; and at the approach of death, his proſpects are clear and bright, his hopes ſublime and ſtedfaſt, and the baſis of his expectations as ſecure as the word of the unchangeable God (c).

Theſe are conſolations which the world cannot give: They are the genuine productions of that divine Paraclete, who was promiſed to the faithful until the end of the world (d). How far they depend on the knowledge revealed concerning him, will further appear, by comparing them with the effects of that opinion, which the Heathens entertained concerning the inſpiration of their gods.

The moſt intelligent of the ancient ſages acknowledged the prevalence, though they could not explain the origin, of human depravity (e). They believed alſo that it might be corrected by ſome ex-

(a) *Pſal.* ciii. 1. — (b) *Gal.* iv. 6. — (c) *Pſal.* xxiii. 4. 2 *Tim.* iv. 8. *Heb.* vi. 17, 18. — (d) *John* xiv. 16. — (e) *See Horace's 1ſt Book of Satires.* iii. 68.

terior influence. This belief, whether it aroſe from ſome ingenious but accidental conjecture, from ſome remote tradition, or from the conſciouſneſs of human frailty, was of high antiquity. It was interwoven into the texture of their ancient poetry, and became a favourite maxim of their philoſophy. It glows in many luminous paſſages of Homer (a), of Seneca (b), of Cicero (c), and of Demoſthenes (d); and may therefore be deemed an eſſential article of the public faith. But then, they imagined the inſpiration of the god to be capricious, arbitrary, and irreſiſtible (e); often without the intervention of human means, and not always directed to moral ends (f).

Yet, though they never ſuſpected any ſteps to be neceſſary on their part, we cannot limit the goodneſs of God, ſo far as to deny them

(a) *John* xiv. 16.—(b) Αλλα τις αθανατων τρεψε φρενας. Τω δ'αρ επι φρεσι θηκε Θεα γλαυκωπις Αθηνη. *So alſo Sophocles*, Æd. Tyr. l. 37. "Προσθηκη θεϊ, Λεγη, νομιζη δ'ημιν ορθωσαι βιον." *Alſo* l. 900. 1281. 1283.—(c) *Nulla mens bona ſine Deo.*—(d) *Nemo igitur vir magnus, ſine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit.*—(e) Τουτοις βελτιω τινα νουν και φρενας ενθειητε. *So alſo Salluſt*, B. I. 97. "*Illi aut mentem divinam eſſe, aut Deorum nutu cuncta portendi.*"—(f) *To this purpoſe is the following paſſage of Æſchines againſt Cteſiphon.* λη. "Ισως δε και δαιμονιᾳ τινος εξαμαρτανειν αυτον προαγομενω." *See alſo* μγ. *See alſo Sophocles*, Æd. Tyr. 1350.—

"Πῶς ετλης τοιαυτα σας
"Οψεις μαραναι; τις σ'επηρε δαιμονων."

So alſo l. 847 *and* 1327. *And ſtill more directly in Antigone*, l. 635.

"Το κακον δοκειν ποτ' εσθλον
"Τωδ'εμμεν' ὁτω φρενας
"Θεος αγει προς ατην." *Alſo* l. 1287. 1288.

And again in Æd. Col. 384.

"Νυν δ'ἐκ θεων τω κἀξ αλιτηρᾶ φρενος
"Εισηλθε τοιν τρισαθλοιν ερις κακη."

See alſo Euripides' Φοινισσαι. 365, 366. 426. 1640—3. *And Æſchylus'* Επτα επι Θηβαις. 503—4. 695. 711—14 *Burton's edition.*

every aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit: He might be pleaſed to operate on the minds of thoſe who endeavoured to become better men; and might produce thoſe beneficial effects, which they ignorantly aſcribed to the power of philoſophy.

But, without amuſing ourſelves with probability, let us attend to fact. Did this belief remove their anxiety, ſolace their minds, or fortify them againſt the fears of death? Did it produce a ſanctity of manners? Did it preſerve inviolate the celebration of the myſteries? Did it controul the popular opinion, that the gods were honoured, in proportion as their rites were polluted?—An opinion, which ſeems to exterminate the laſt remains of devotion. So uſeleſs, and even pernicious, may the beſt information become, when imperfectly underſtood, or miſapplied, or blended with fable.

Mankind are ſometimes incautious in forming opinions; and too often draw precipitate concluſions, from premiſes, in the examination of which they have been haſty, if not partial. From the miſtaken idea that the Holy Spirit acts irreſiſtibly, ſome would infer that human actions cannot be morally good or evil; and that human agents cannot be the ſubjects of either praiſe or blame. But, the aſſumption is groundleſs, and the concluſion falſe.

The Spirit of God does not act by compulſion. His purpoſe is our moral improvement; and he leaves full ſcope to the exerciſe of our moral powers. He is pleaſed to adopt a method, which, however different it may be in kind, is not more compulſory than that of gentle perſuaſive inſinuation; and, while he co-operates with our endeavours, he leaves ample room for our ſincerity, attention, and exertion.

The

The virtues of mature age are ſtrictly and eſſentially moral: Yet they are ripened, if not principally formed, by exterior influence. The liberty of the agent, during his courſe of diſcipline, is not even ſuſpected to be abridged: though he is allured by every winning art of perſuaſion, example, and reward; and impelled by the violent motives of precept and puniſhment.

The ſame freedom of choice and liberty of action, which are admitted to obtain in common life, and which cannot but be implied in the regulations of civil ſociety, notwithſtanding the force of example, emulation and habit, may legitimately be affirmed to remain, without diminution, under the agency of the Holy Spirit. The effects of human and divine influence ſeem to be of the ſame kind: The difference lies in the cauſe, and mode of operation. The cauſes of criminal miſconduct may be diſtinctly aſſigned, and their effects preciſely computed; ſo that vice may often be traced through all its progreſs, from the firſt ſymptoms of an evil heart, to the laſt ſtage of abandoned profligacy: Whereas we indulge an idle curioſity, and wander in the regions of vague conjecture, whenever we attempt to diſcover the ſteps by which we are enabled to advance in virtue. The divine operation is to be inferred from the fruits only which it produces. In what manner it corrects our inclinations and ſubdues our habits, we are not informed by Revelation, and we know not from reaſon.

Nor is the want of this knowledge any objection. Every thing is revealed which is neceſſary to ſalvation; and we have no reaſon to expect more. The human frame preſents a difficulty of exactly the ſame kind; yet we have no cauſe to murmur, though we cannot explain it. We can form no ſort of conception, how the ſpirit

of man operates upon his body. The limbs are in motion, or at reſt; they begin, or ceaſe, to act; and perform all their reſpective functions, in obedience to the arbitrary determinations of the will. We have an intuitive perception of the fact; but the manner of it is wholly inexplicable.

The ſame ſcripture, which reveals all uſeful knowledge concerning the Holy Spirit, informs us, at the ſame time, that the mode of his operation is beyond the reach of our preſent faculties (a). This information is itſelf a diſtinct advantage; as it aſcertains with preciſion the limits of our knowledge, and prevents us from wearying ourſelves with fruitleſs reſearches.

Revelation was intended for the bulk of mankind; and its leading doctrines are level to every capacity. The divine agency, far from requiring an abſtruſe and complicated enquiry, is eaſy and intelligible. It conſiſts, not in any myſterious perturbation of ſpirits; not in any infuſion of new gifts, powers, or faculties; not in any ſudden extacies or tranſports, we know not why or whence:— But, ſimply, in a change of moral principle.

From this natural interpretation, which, we preſume, is the true ſenſe of ſcripture, miſtaken or deſigning men begin to recede in oppoſite directions, till they arrive at extremes equally remote and dangerous. They imagine, either that, like the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, they are miraculouſly inſpired; and that all their thoughts, words, and actions proceed from a divine impulſe: Or they contend, on the other hand, that the graces, which are called ſpiritual gifts, are ſo denominated by way of accommodation to the familiar

(a) *John* iii. 8.

familiar modes of ſpeech; and mean only the common operations of the human ſpirit, which, with all other uſeful gifts, are from above (a).

The former of theſe opinions is unlike that chaſte ſobriety of thought, which is the reſult of religion tempered with reaſon; and, if admitted, would leave mankind little better than machines. The latter is inconſiſtent with the promiſes of the Holy Spirit, which pre-ſuppoſe the exiſtence of the common faculties; and which are offered, in order to guide, to ſtrengthen, and to illumine the underſtanding; and to cleanſe, renew and ſanctify the heart (b).

It is no ſmall advantage of the knowledge revealed to mankind concerning the Holy Spirit, that, while it leaves the proud to their own imaginations, and ſuffers thoſe who profeſs themſelves wiſe to become fools (c), it enables the humble to diſcern the leaſt deflection from truth. Far be it from the Chriſtian, who has duly profited by this knowledge, to maintain that the Spirit of God acts partially or capriciouſly; that he makes a blind diſtinction of perſons; and overlooks ſome, while he beſtows his benign, his irreſiſtible influences upon others: The Almighty Parent is an univerſal, as well as an impartial benefactor (d). He beholds all his children with the ſame affectionate regard. As they are equally the objects of his love, he makes them equally partakers of his bounty. He conſiders them, not as machines, but as men endued with reaſon, with reflection, with reſolution: And he gives to every one ſome ſpiritual "talent," ſome meaſure of his grace, "to profit withal." (e)

With-

(a) *James* i. 17.—(b) 1 *Pet.* v. 10. 1 *Theſſ.* v. 23.—(c) *Rom.* i. 22.—(d) *Matt.* v. 45.—(e) 1 *Cor.* xii. 7.

Without this grace, we ſhould be deſtitute of every qualification for that place, into which nothing defiled or unholy can enter (a): But, we have ſeen that its immediate tendency is, to raiſe the ſoul from earth to heaven; to purify the affections, and direct them to their proper objects; to deſtroy the remains of impiety and malevolence, and to cultivate in their place a conſcientious regard to charity and devotion; and, finally, to adminiſter comfort in diſtreſs, ſupport under affliction, ſtrength in the day of trial, and conſolation againſt the fear of death.

Theſe bleſſings of the Holy Spirit were not confined to the firſt ages of the church: They are diſpenſed, at the preſent day, with an unſeen indeed, but with a liberal hand, to all true believers; and, to our unſpeakable advantage, we are aſſured, from the infallible records of truth, that they will remain the privileges of the faithful, until the conſummation of all things (b).

This knowledge will conduct us, with proper ſentiments of humility and truſt, to the throne of grace; and will gradually create in us ſome reſemblance (c) to that Divine Being, who cannot look on iniquity, but will reveal himſelf face to face to the pure in heart; and who will furniſh matter of eternal adoration and praiſe, by a full diſplay of the plan, the progreſs, and the completion of man's ſalvation.

(a) *Rev.* xxi. 27. — (b) *Matt.* xxviii. 20. — (c) 2 *Cor.* iii. 18.

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